

God's Privileged People

1 Peter 2:4-10

Pastor John Miller

Now Peter, who we found to be the rock, was given us a vivid description thus far in this text of Jesus Christ our Rock. I want you to notice it. In verse 4, He's called " . . . a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God;" in verse 6, He's called the " . . . chief corner stone;" and in verse 8, He's called the " . . . stone of stumbling." He's also the stone which would be the smiting stone when He comes back in His Second Coming with power and great glory. Peter now shifts from the focus on Christ as the living stone to God's people being the living stones and compacted together we comprise the Church of the living God. He describes what is corporately true of all believers in that we are united with Christ together as one fellowship, one body in Christ. Peter paints three pictures or metaphors to help us understand the privilege of God's people, the Church. Peter closes this section on salvation in verse 10.

For several weeks, beginning in 1Peter 1:1, we've been talking about standing in our salvation, and the next section we're going to move into is standing in submission as we submit to the Lord's authority in this world around us. We are the privileged people of God is the theme also known as the Church.

We also learn from this text, just a little footnote before we begin to unpack it, that Christian life is to be lived in community with other Christians. You're here tonight, and you're to be commended for that, but the Bible knows nothing of the "Lone Ranger" Christian. Remember the Lone Ranger? "Hi-ho, Silver! Away!" and all that? So, no "Lone Ranger" Christians. "I don't need the church. I don't want the church. I don't go to church. I'm a Christian, but I don't like Christians. I'm a Christian, but I don't fellowship with Christians. I don't hang out with Christians." No, we are united together, we form the Church, and we are the building of God, the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, and He inhabits us and we need one another.

If you ever get a chance, get a Concordance and trace all the "one anothers" in the Bible—love one another, serve one another, forgive one another, build one another up, provoke one another to love and good works. You can't do "one anothers" if there's no "one anothers" in your life. We need that fellowship with one another. Amen? It's so important. We need the fellowship, we need the love, we need the body of Christ. It's how we grow as believers.

Back in 1 Peter 2:2, he says, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." So we grow by feeding on the Word and we grow by fellowship with one another. We feed on the Word, and we fellowship with one another.

Now the three things that Peter says using these pictures of the Church or metaphors that I want you to see. First, we as the Church are stones—you might add living stones—in the same building. We are living stones in one same building, the universal Church. Look at verses 4-5, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone,"—referring to Christ—"disallowed indeed of men"—or rejected by men—"but chosen of God, and precious." Then, look at verse 5, "Ye also,"—he

switches from talking about Christ who is the Living Stone to the believers—"Ye also, as lively stones"—my King James Bible has 'lively stones,' but the better translation of that Greek word would be 'living stones'—"are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." We are living stones, built up, and in the Greek it actually reads being built up. Jesus is presently building His Church with these living stones, and we are a spiritual house.

Again, notice the intended contrast in verse 5 from verse 4. He says, "Ye also," so he's talking now to believers. Keep in mind that everything he says about the believers here is in the context of corporately the Church. He's not just talking about individual issues, he's talking about we as a Church. You need to understand that the Church is both local, that is, the individual congregations like we have here at Revival Christian Fellowship, and universal. In order to be a part of the universal Church, you have to be born again. Every believer, no matter what local church they attend, is a part of the universal Church, but only those who have been born again and regenerated by the Holy Spirit. As I've pointed out, they're taken out of Adam and are placed in Christ, and in Christ we form His body, He is the head. Those are the pictures of the Church universal. We are living stones. Because of our new birth, we are now tapped into His life. We have the life of God in our soul, so we're living stones.

Notice in verse 5 it says we " . . . are built up a spiritual house," so living stones, united to Jesus, living stones we are being " . . . built up a spiritual house." Today, what God is doing in the world is building His Church. Sometimes we minimize that or we neglect that truth, but the number one thing God is doing in the world right now is building His Church, that's what God's number one work is right now, building the Church.

I believe that the Church was born in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost, that was the birth of the Church, and I'll talk about it more in a minute, but the end of the Church on earth is when we get raptured or " . . . caught up . . . to meet the Lord in the air," and there'd be the wedding feast of the Lamb, we'll be forever with the Lord and with those who have gone to be with the Lord. But I want you to see that concept that it was birthed in Acts 2, the Holy Spirit came and baptized the believers into Christ, uniting them to the living Head, living stones forming the body of Christ, and then it will be caught up or raptured " . . . to meet the Lord in the air," before the seven years of tribulation, before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, before the Millennium or the Kingdom Age or the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ.

Jesus, today, is all about building His Church, and if we want to work together in harmony with Him, then we will do everything we can to be strengthening, helping, building, encouraging the Church of Jesus Christ. Amen? That's why the Church needs you, you need the Church. "And the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,'" we're all important members of the body, so you need to be committed to and connected to and a part of a local church fellowship of believers. You cannot grow apart from other believers. You say, "I'm just a loving Christian. I just love everybody, but I don't go to church." Well, that makes no sense. Sometimes people say, "I don't go to church because, you know, there's too many problems in the church." If you find a perfect church, don't join it, right?, because if you do, it won't be perfect anymore.

There's no such thing as a perfect church because there are no perfect people, but every Christian needs to make a priority of being a part of, connected to, a local fellowship which is an expression of the unity that we have in the universal body of Christ.

The other pictures, as I said, are we're His body, we're His bride, but now here in this text we are His building or we are a house. Now, notice it's " . . . a spiritual house," verse 5, which means it's not material. Jesus said in Matthew 16, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" So they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah . . . or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?'" Remember Peter's famous words? "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." And He said, " . . . upon this rock I will build my church." Now, I don't believe the Church is built on Peter, I believe the Church is built on Jesus Christ.

This whole passage we've been in tonight for these last two weeks is about Jesus Christ, the chief cornerstone, and He's the foundation stone; and the Church is built on Christ and the teaching of the Apostles. Jesus said, "That thou art Peter," you are Pétros, you're a little pebble a little stone, "and upon this rock," pétra, this big massive slab stone, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Jesus is building His Church, but it's a spiritual house, not a physical house.

In the Old Testament God inhabited a tabernacle, a tent, in the wilderness with His presence. Then it was moved into Solomon's Temple where the presence of the Lord went into the holy of holies and there He dwelt among them. Then, my favorite Christmas verse, John 1:14, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," or the Word flesh became. It means that He pitched His tent among us—God became a man incarnate, God dwelling among us. In 1 Corinthians 6, our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Then, Ephesians 2:20, if you're taking notes, write that down. Let me read it from verse 19 down to verse 22. Paul says, "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone," the same thing Peter told us. Verse 21, "In whom all the building,"—there's the picture, the Church—"fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

So, we are what? A building, not just this local church, but the Church universal. Not a physical building...I don't know about you, and I'm glad that this is not God's house. He doesn't live here. You're God's house. He lives in you. When we leave, the Lord and the Holy Spirit go with us. Amen? We're living stones and we come together and form the body of Christ, but we should be praying for the church, we should be serving in the church, we should be doing all we can to build up and strengthen the church and to do what God's called us to do in this world of reaching the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Here's the second metaphor of the text, that is, we are priests in the same temple. So, we are

stones, living, in the same building, but we all as individual Christians are together priests in the same temple. Look at verse 5, “. . . an holy priesthood,”—there it is, referring to Christians—“to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” We as believers are actually priests, and we are, “to offer up spiritual,”—not physical or material, but spiritual—“sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”

In the Old Testament God's people, Israel, had a priesthood, Exodus 29. It was of the tribe of Levi in the family of Aaron who were the priests. Today, New Testament believers are priests. They make up the priesthood of Christ, and we're all a holy priesthood. Now, nowhere in the New Testament, or in the Old Testament for the church is not there, but nowhere in the Bible are pastors or ministers called priests or addressed as “Father.” You can search all you want, you can do all your homework in background research, there's no office of a minister that is called a “priest.” Jesus said, “And call no man your father.” We all as individual believers are priests. This is one of the products of the Protestant Reformation breaking away from the Roman Catholic Church, the idea of the individual priesthood of the believer, that we all have access to God—we can pray directly to God, we can go directly into the presence of God—we don't have to have a human intermediary. The Bible says, “For there is . . . one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” But we, as individuals, are actually priests before God which is a very, very cool truth.

All the Christians are holy priesthood, verse 9. In verse 9, peek at it real quickly, “. . . a royal priesthood.” So we're called, “. . . an holy priesthood,” verse 5, and we're called, “. . . a royal priesthood,” in verse 9. We are as God's people came directly to Him—we can come to Him through Jesus Christ. Like the priests of the Old Testament, there are some things that are true of us. If you're taking notes, write them down. First, we are chosen and called by God. The priests would be chosen and called by God, so God chose and called us, Exodus 29; and Ephesians 1:4, “. . . chosen us in him before the foundation of the world,” so we are chosen to be His priests, we are washed as the Old Testament priests were washed. In Titus 3:5 it says, “. . . by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit.” In John 13, when Jesus washed the disciples' feet, “He who is bathed”—that's the washing of regeneration—“needs only to wash his feet,” when they sin to restore fellowship.

Notice thirdly, we are clothed as priests, Exodus 29:5-9. The high priests were given robes. They were given linen garments to wear. Do you know that we as Christians are given robes? The righteousness of Jesus Christ. Amen? The moment you're born again, God imputes to you the righteousness of Christ. You stand in the righteousness of Christ complete. You have the robe of righteousness.

Fourthly, we are anointed, and I love this picture. In Exodus 29:7, they would actually pour oil on the priest and anoint him. They would also do an anointing where they would anoint his right thumb, his right ear, and his right big toe to symbolize he was to hear the voice of God and hear the Word of God, his hands were to do the work of God serving the Lord, and his feet were to walk in the ways of God. We too are anointed by the Holy Spirit to do our ministry as priests.

Why has God made us a holy priesthood? Verse 5, “. . . to offer up spiritual sacrifices,” notice they are spiritual. In the Old Testament they offered bulls and goats, turtledoves, lambs, but Jesus, once and for all, offered Himself on the cross as our sacrifice. Our spiritual sacrifices are nonmaterial. They are inspired by, guided and directed by, the Holy Spirit.

Let me give you a list of the spiritual sacrifices we as individual believing priests offer up. First is prayer, Psalm 141:2, “Let my prayer be set before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.” Some of you raised your hands tonight as you worshiped the Lord, so the lifting of our hands is a sacrifice. I don’t maybe feel like it, but I want to worship Him and make a sacrifice of praise, so I offer myself to Him. It’s a symbolic gesture of saying, “I surrender to You. I surrender my life to You. I worship You.”

The second thing we do as priests to offer up spiritual sacrifices is praise. Hebrews 13:15, “. . . let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.” We pray and we praise the Lord. The fruit of our lips praising the Lord is a spiritual sacrifice.

The third, good works are a sacrifice to God. Hebrews 13:16, “But to do good and to communicate”—which means giving help to others—“forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” So, a sacrifice of service. We all should be serving the Lord as a sacrifice to Him.

Fourthly, we have a broken spirit and a contrite heart. This is what it says in Psalm 51:17. After David had sinned with Bathsheba and repented and sought the Lord for forgiveness, David said, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a contrite heart, that God would not despise.

Lastly, fifthly, we offer our bodies as priests to the Lord. Romans 12:1, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present”—which means to offer up, to lay on the altar—“your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service”—or act of worship. Those are five things we do as priests, set apart for God, to sacrificially worship Him and praise the Lord as priests.

Notice in verse 5 these are called, “. . . acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” These offerings we give to God as priests are acceptable to God by—in and through—Jesus Christ. These spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God only as we do them by—and for—Jesus Christ, in His name, and for His glory. When I pray, when I praise, when I lift my hands, when I lift my heart to God in brokenness and repentance, it all should be done as “. . . sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ,” for His honor and for His glory. Just don’t forget that. You as a believer are a priest in the household of God.

Here’s the third and last picture of the Church, believers. We are citizens of the same nation. We’re citizens of the same nation. So, we’re stones in the same building, we’re priests in the same temple, and we are also citizens of the same nation.

We jump down to verse 9. Look at verse 9, “But ye are a chosen generation.” Verses 6-8 we looked at last week all deal with Christ the stone. Now, He’s again, “But ye,” the contrast. “But ye,”—speaking to believers, the Church—“are a chosen generation.” This is one of the best descriptions of the Church in the New Testament, “. . . chosen generation,”—again—“a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people”—there we are peculiar people—“that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness”—I love that—“into his marvellous light: 10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.” Again, that’s one of the greatest descriptions in the New Testament of the Church, citizens in the same nation.

As Israel was privileged as a nation in the Old Testament, so now the Church is the privileged people of God. In Ephesians 2, one of the classic chapters describing the Church, the focus is on the body of Christ, the Church. In Colossians the focus is on the head, Christ. In Ephesians 2 he said that Christ “. . . hath broken down the middle wall of partition”—dividing Jew and Gentile, that we’ve all become—“. . . one new man.” That phrase means one new humanity. We’ve become a new race. We’re not Jew, we’re not Gentile, we’re not male, we’re not female, we’re not bond, we’re not Scythian. We’re all just one—the family of God, the people of God, the children of God—in this new nation, this privileged group of believers.

Even in light of that, I want to warn you that I don’t believe that the Bible is teaching here—or anywhere else for that matter—that the Church has taken the place of Israel’s program prophetically, that God still has a purpose and a plan and a design for Israel as a nation. Israel is God’s time clock. Prophecy revolves around Israel. But there are those today in the church that sadly misinterpret Scripture, and they believe that God is finished with Israel as a nation and that He has transferred His focus to the Church, and they make it so that we are become spiritual Israel, it’s called replacement theology, and I don’t believe that that’s what the Bible is teaching here at all. If you study Romans 9, 10, and 11, which we did on Wednesday night, God’s Plan for Israel, you see Romans 9, Israel was elected; Romans 10, Israel was rejected; Romans 11, Israel is restored. Israel’s election, rejection, restoration—Romans 9, 10, and 11. But to say that God is finished with Israel is to misinterpret His plan and purpose in the world.

The Bible teaches that the Church is a unique, special entity of Jew and Gentile united to Christ, the building, the body, the bride of Christ, but we don’t take Israel’s place. This is why I believe after the rapture takes place and the Antichrist is revealed and he makes a covenant with Israel for seven years that God’s prophetic time clock for the last seven years of mankind upon earth are going to tick off and that seventieth week of Daniel’s prophecy will be fulfilled and the Messiah will come back in the Second Coming, and then He will sit upon the throne of David, which is the millennial Kingdom Age, for a thousand years and then that will flow into the eternal state. There’s still so much future for us!

At Christmas we look back at the incarnation, we still have the Second Coming. We as believers, the Church, have something very special and unique which is only revealed in the New Testament, it’s a New Testament revelation; that is, the rapture of the bride, the catching up of the body of Christ. Amen? What a marvelous truth that is, and we look forward to it. It’s

the blessed hope of the believer, the coming again of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

For now the Church is what God is doing and all about in the world today. As I said, it's His body, it's His bride, and it's His building. There are other metaphors, by the way, too—we're a flock, He's the Shepherd, we're sheep; we're an army; we're united to Him, Christ is the vine, we are the branches. There are other images of the Church, but these three are the main—we are the body, we're the bride, and we're the building of God not made with hands.

When we are complete as the Church is full, and God's finished with His time with the Church, this is when the bride, dressed in the righteousness imputed to them by Christ, will be raptured, caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

Some say the rapture is not in the Bible. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13, Paul says, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep"—or die—"that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him"—when He comes back. So, if you die before the rapture, you're going to come back with Christ, and you're going to meet the living saints in the air. That's why he says, ". . . and the dead in Christ shall rise first," their physical bodies will be resurrected from the grave, reunited with their soul and spirit, and they'll have a new glorified body. "Then we who are alive and remain shall be"—here's our word—*harpáz* ὧ which is the word caught up in the English Bible or *raptus*, which is in the Latin Vulgate. You'll be raptured, you'll be ". . . caught up . . . to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Believe me, it could happen at any moment. The stage is set for the rapture of the Church. Wouldn't it be great if we celebrated Christmas and that day got raptured? That would be a great Christmas, wouldn't it? Face to face with Jesus Christ! What a marvelous truth is the body of Christ the Church.

Peter, using these four images taken from Isaiah 43 and Exodus 19, describes the Christians like this. Let me look at them rapid fire. Verse 9, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people." Those are the descriptions he used of the Church—a chosen generation, in verse 9, which means a chosen race, the Church. He says, verse 9, "But ye," in the Greek it's emphatic, it starts with the word 'you' "are a chosen"—race—"generation." Then, notice in verse 9 as well, "a royal priesthood." We've already covered that. We are a holy priesthood, verse 5; we are "a royal priesthood," verse 9. Royal priesthood because we belong to God and we are in the service of Christ who is the King. We belong to God and we are in His service as King, which actually indicates that we are the people of God.

You know, it's good to remind ourselves that we are God's people. We're not just a social club. We're not just some people that get together and just hang out and talk about God and read the Bible. We're actually chosen by God. We are a royal priesthood. When it says that we're, ". . . a peculiar people," it means that we are actually special, chosen by God. So we're a royal priesthood, chosen, special. Because we belong to God, we are in the service of Christ who is our King. We serve in His house.

Then we are “. . . an holy nation.” He’s taken that from Exodus 19:6 which means that we are set apart, dedicated, to God and His service. The Church is God’s people set apart, dedicated, to do God’s service. Israel failed because they became like other nations. Israel was to be a light to the other nations, instead they wanted to be like the other nations, and that’s where they failed. We as a Church need to be lights and salt and live separate, holy, consecrated, dedicated lives to the Lord. It doesn’t mean we shouldn’t permeate culture. It doesn’t mean we shouldn’t affect culture, but we have a higher calling than this world. This world is not our home.

There’s another dangerous doctrine called Dominion Theology, the whole focus that we bring back the King, we establish the Kingdom on earth. We take over banks, and we take over nations, and we take over the government. We take over all the goings on in the world, and we “Bring in the Kingdom.” No, the King is going to bring in the Kingdom. Jesus is going to bring in the Kingdom. He is going to be taking out His bride, He’s going to be taking out His Church, and then we return with the King and establish His Kingdom, and He shall reign forever and ever. Amen? That’s the Kingdom, and only He can bring in the Kingdom. No political entity can do that. We need to be a holy nation. We need to be a light to the other nations, and it’s important for us to remember that.

First John 2:15, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”

Notice we’re also, verse 9, a peculiar people. I’ve already mentioned that means that we are God’s own possession, special people, a people belonging to God. Remember before you were saved, you were actually a child of the devil. I just thought I’d encourage you. Which is true, right? You were living “. . . according to the prince of the power of the air, that spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience,” living in darkness, hating one another. We were the children of the devil, and through God’s grace and mercy we became children of God. We were taken out of darkness and translated into His marvelous light. We were redeemed by the death of Christ, so we now belong to God. We are His own possession. You know, as pastors, we need to remind ourselves, I’m reminding myself, our other pastors and other pastors in other churches, that the people of God are not their people, they’re God’s people. You belong to God. You’re God’s problem.

Sometimes I have to remind myself, Lord, they’re Your problem, not my problem; they’re Your people, not my people. Take care of it. The pastor is just an undershepherd. The Church belongs to God. They are the people of God. It’s so important.

Notice in verse 9, “. . . that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” That’s what we do as the Church. We “shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” God’s purpose for us as people, the Church, is to show forth. It means to declare or proclaim—to proclaim His praise, His excellencies, and His mercies and love. His mercy, His grace, and His love are to be showed forth and shining forth.

Notice also in verse 9, He “. . . called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” I love that. Peter, drawing in verse 10 from the Old Testament book of Hosea 1:6 and 9, explains what it means to be taken out of darkness to light. It means that before your salvation you were not God's people, verse 10, but now you are God's people. Once, verse 10, there was no mercy, but now you have experienced, obtained, the mercy of God. Mercy is God not giving us what we deserve.

Here are the three things we need to remember: we are stones in the same building, we are priests in the same temple, we are citizens of the same nation. You know, we need to have a high view of God, we need to have a high view of Scripture, and we need to have a high view of the Church. One of the reasons the Church suffers today so much is because we have such a low view of the Church, a take it or leave it kind of attitude. We need to have a high view of the Church. It's His bride. It's His body. Do you know that in the history of the Church that Christians have died. They've given their lives sacrificially for the Church to advance the Church. The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church, and we just take it for granted. We just don't appreciate it.

Remember when Covid shut down the church and we were supposedly not allowed to gather and congregate? What a sad, tragic thing that was, and we sometimes still just take it for granted—the gathering together of the saints.

So, we're stones, we're priests, we're citizens. Let's pray.